



The United States Agency for International Development

# Agriculture Reconstruction and Development Program for Iraq

---

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
FACT SHEET

---

WASHINGTON, DC 20523  
PRESS OFFICE  
<http://www.usaid.gov>  
(202) 712-4320

2003-051

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 5, 2003

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is launching the Agriculture Reconstruction and Development Program for Iraq (ARDI). The objective of this program is to revitalize agricultural production, stimulate income and employment generation through agro-enterprise and market development, nurture rural financial services, and rehabilitate the country's natural resource base.

USAID is requesting proposals from U.S. organizations to implement performance-based program activities and incorporate a well-coordinated consortium of internationally acclaimed institutions with substantial experience and international ties.

During the last two decades, agricultural systems in the dry, irrigated and range lands of Iraq faced unprecedented pressure to meet the food requirements of a population increasing at an annual rate of approximately three percent. Poor and inefficient use of irrigation water has resulted in salinization, nutrient depletion and water logging in an estimated 74 percent of the arable lands in Iraq. Desertification has affected wide areas of range lands in Iraq, constraining livestock and small animal productivity. In addition, highlands in the northeast are heavily deforested and overgrazed, resulting in soil erosion and increasing sedimentation.

Recovery for the agricultural economy in Iraq will focus on increasing agricultural productivity and the efficiency of small- and medium-sized rural enterprises. The agricultural labor force may include as many as 500,000 farmers and 250,000 small and medium agribusinesses that procure and sell agricultural inputs, process commodities and trade in commodities and products.

## Strategy

The four ARDI components envisioned will contribute to the reemergence and modernization of the agriculture system in a post-conflict Iraq. In the immediate term, quick impact activities will stimulate agricultural production and contribute to food security. Through rapid rural appraisals emergency needs will be identified and critical agricultural inputs supplied, including seeds, fertilizer and irrigation equipment for upcoming planting seasons. Over the medium term USAID will provide a

wide range of technical assistance, financial services, training, and equipment to improve management of soil and water resources, reinvigorate local markets, stimulate agro-enterprise development and increase agriculture trade and investment.

Revitalize Agricultural Production: USAID assistance will identify and increase farmers' access to key agricultural inputs, including improved varieties, fertilizers, crop management and protection practices to support upcoming planting seasons. Recommendations will be provided for improving the competitiveness of traditional cereals, specialized fruits and vegetables, agro-forestry, forestry, livestock and poultry producers; developing land, forest, and water tenure to enhance productivity and resource stewardship; and disseminating information technology systems that increase farm productivity.

Stimulate Agro-enterprises and Market Development: To reactivate the rural economy, technical assistance, technologies and financial services will be provided for small and medium enterprise development. Technical support will expand the provision of financial services to micro, small- and medium-scale enterprises involved in production, processing, and marketing activities. Crop and livestock assessments will identify the constraints and opportunities in the "farm production to consumer market" chain and provide the framework for the development and implementation of program interventions. Over the medium term improved business development services will create incentives for rural families to improve their productivity and competitiveness by planting new crops, using new farming techniques and adjusting their marketing approach. Concurrently, agri-businesses and natural resource enterprises will benefit from the business development services through increased competitiveness, profitability, and domestic and international market share.

Nurture Rural Financial Services: The immediate challenge for the ARDI program is to define effective and sustainable financing operations that would meet the needs of farmers, input dealers, market agents and agro-processor clients. Activities supporting rural financial services would become integral to the country's future financial system. USAID will support an initial assessment of client financing requirements in conjunction with the assessment of crop sub-sector clusters. The assessment will investigate the formal and informal sources of financing, outline the socio-cultural, geographical, legal and administrative circumstances that would effect lending programs, and define specific regulatory requirements. USAID will solicit competitive proposals for lending operations from financial institutions.

Rehabilitate the Natural Resources Base: Working closely with U.S. and international organizations and research centers USAID will demonstrate appropriate conservation and resource management technologies to promote sustainable land use, improve farm water management, and mitigate harmful impacts to public health due to unregulated contamination and effluents. Training and technical assistance will be provided to farmers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and water user associations to improve water use efficiency, reduce drainage and resulting water-logging and salinity problems, and increase farmer's net returns. Technology packages will be disseminated to teach farmers how to select appropriate crops and integrate improved irrigation practices into the production cycle. Planning will be initiated for an integrated water resources management program aimed at promoting basin-wide cooperation, mitigating the impacts of dams in the upper basin and instituting measures for the restoration of the Mesopotamian marshlands.

---